
CHAPTER 5

NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

The improvements described in this chapter are recommended to the City of Seattle and King County Metro for implementation in the near future as warranted by safety and congestion needs. These recommendations were developed based on a review of neighborhood plans, the results of extensive public involvement, interagency cooperation, and technical analysis.

State law RCW 47.24.020 requires cities with a population over 22,500 to be responsible for traffic operation improvements such as traffic signals, left-turn restrictions, parking restrictions, and bus lane designations. Therefore, although SR 99 North is a state owned roadway, traffic operation improvements on SR 99 North are the responsibility of the City of Seattle. King County Metro is responsible for funding and operating bus service on SR 99 North.

WSDOT is responsible for repaving SR 99 North and approving the City's channelization plans and traffic signal installations. Day to day traffic operations management is the responsibility of the City of Seattle. With an understanding the traffic operation improvements are the responsibility of the City of Seattle and transit improvements are the responsibility of King County, the following near-term improvements are recommended to promote a safer and more secure corridor, and support long-term mobility for corridor users.

Safety Improvement Recommendations

As presented in Chapter 3, Accidents and Safety Issues, the study corridor has a high number of vehicle and non-motorized traffic accidents. The majority of accidents involve rear-ends, sideswipes, vehicles colliding with fixed objects, or vehicles colliding at right angles. Several sections of the corridor also have a high number of accidents involving pedestrians and other non-motorized users.

The following improvements are recommended to reduce accidents and improve safety on SR 99 North:

- ♦ Implement left-turn restrictions in high accident areas with a preponderance of left-turn related accidents
- ♦ In high accident areas with narrow lanes, consider parking removal in order to provide wider travel lanes
- ♦ Provide a safer place for pedestrians and other non-motorized users by improving crossings and adding sidewalks, curbs, and gutters in conjunction with private redevelopment to required City of Seattle development code width

- ◆ Provide intersection signal improvements to mitigate angle and turning accidents
- ◆ Where lacking, install bus shelters, lighting, and litter receptacles to make Aurora safer and cleaner for transit riders
- ◆ Encouraging additional law enforcement of posted speed limits, business access and transit (BAT) lane usage restrictions, and restriction of driving under the influence (see Law Enforcement Improvement Recommendations)
- ◆ Improve access management in developing areas by consolidating and evenly spacing driveways

Congestion Improvement Recommendations

As noted in Chapter 2: Traffic Conditions, traffic congestion levels on SR 99 North are high and are expected to get worse. In addition to increasing traffic volumes, corridor users have to maneuver through sections of northbound and southbound roadway that narrow from three to two travel lanes and squeeze traffic during peak periods of congestion. Both the increasing traffic volumes and the corridor sections operating with a reduced number of travel lanes during peak hours contribute to congestion and safety problems on SR 99 North.

Traffic congestion on SR 99 North is a difficult, if not impossible, problem to solve. The SR 99 North study corridor is “built up” with many long-standing, established businesses. Since the existing built-up environment does not provide room to add significant new road capacity, the following improvements are recommended to ensure long-term mobility:

- ◆ Maximize the people moving capacity of the corridor northbound and southbound during peak periods of congestion
- ◆ As feasible, maintain and improve freight access and mobility along the corridor
- ◆ Continue traffic signal operational improvements
- ◆ Continue transit speed and reliability improvements to maximize the people carrying capacity of the corridor.

Security Improvement Recommendations

Several sections of SR 99 North experience criminal activity. The public has expressed concern about security when traveling on foot both along and across SR 99 North.

Additional law enforcement, lighting and other security improvements are recommended along the corridor.

Law Enforcement Improvement Recommendations

Speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, and illegal use of the Business Access and Transit Lane (BAT) lane as a travel lane by vehicles other than buses and right-turning vehicles, are law enforcement problems along the corridor that contribute to many of the accidents that are occurring.

Additional law enforcement of speed limits, BAT lane restrictions, and alcohol consumption laws is recommended to reduce the number of accidents occurring on the corridor.

Continuing support and promotion of the activities of the King County Traffic Safety Coalition (KCTSC) is recommended. The KCTSC is actively involved in a number of activities to reduce alcohol-related accidents on SR 99 North. The KCTSC encourages law enforcement agencies to conduct traffic safety emphasis patrols on days that are known to have high rates of serious, alcohol related accidents. The coalition plans to continue to provide education materials to establishments along SR 99 North that sell alcohol and work with these establishments as well as the Aurora Avenue Merchants Association, and other interest organizations to develop strategies that prevent clientele of liquor licensed establishments from becoming impaired drivers.

Signage Improvement Recommendations

The public has expressed a variety of concerns regarding inadequate signage along SR 99 North. Based on this input, the following recommendations from corridor users have been adopted as study recommendations:

- ♦ Improved BAT lane signage and pavement markings for the existing and any future BAT lanes. The signage should clearly state that the BAT lane is not for carpools and is only to be used by buses or vehicles accessing an intersection or an adjacent business's driveway.



Picture 5-1: BAT lane at SR 99 North and N. 117th Street

- ♦ Improved signage directing corridor users on how to access and exit SR 99 North—including identification of exits that provide east/west access across SR 99 North
- ♦ Improved signage cautioning drivers of slower moving merging or exiting vehicles.